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STATEMENT OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTEE ON UNICEF TO THE 1991 UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. We are grateful for the privilege accorded to us to address this important gathering of those dedicated to the well-being of the children of the world.

2. We pay special tribute to the visionary leadership of this Executive Board and to the staff of UNICEF for the key roles they played in bringing to fruition the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 1989 and the World Summit for Children in September 1990. We are aware of the tireless efforts that were devoted to making these two events a reality. The Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) Committee is furthermore indebted to UNICEF for its strong insistence that NGOs be present at the Summit. This constituted the first time that NGOs were allowed to play a role in a summit meeting. The NGO Committee has given its wholehearted support to these initiatives, recognizing that, together, they provide the world's family of nations with a set of moral and legal standards by which to measure the just treatment of children everywhere.

3. It is our strong conviction that these two events are inseparable, irrevocable and transformational. At some distant time in the future, humankind will look back in history to these two events as the moment when the world began to recognize appropriately the significance of the child and of childhood as key factors in the progress and development of the human race.

4. NGOs have been assessing the significance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the relevance of the World Summit for Children to their work. That reflection has led most of us to feel that we cannot go on conducting business as we have for so many years. We are now presented with a new opportunity to spread the emphasis of what we do more evenly across the

three traditional aims of our mission - survival, protection and development. Within this new context, we are attempting to discern how we can be most helpful, in cooperation with UNICEF and with national Governments, in meeting the goals of the Summit Plan of Action. Just as nations are developing their own plans of action, many NGOs are also developing new plans of action to govern their commitment of resources over the coming years. In that sense, the World Summit for Children has become a magnet around which all else is now organized.

5. A third event that has influenced our work was the World Conference on Education for All, which represented a new expression of cooperation between four United Nations agencies. It also represented a new expression of cooperation among those agencies and the NGOs involved in the education sector. The close cooperation the Conference encouraged has been maintained by the creation of an inter-agency/inter-NGO network to facilitate and promote the Conference follow-up. The success of this model would suggest that United Nations agencies should consider developing a coordinated strategy for supporting NGO networks by themes, and not simply in relation to their allegiance to individual organizations.

6. As a result of all these events, there are several areas where increased cooperation and change are taking place. These may be noted in some of the newly emerging expressions of our activities. I would like to call your attention to the following:

(a) Special meetings of the chief executive officers of NGO member organizations have been held in New York and Geneva this past year so as to encourage their participation, in addition to that of their institutional representatives to the NGO Committee on UNICEF. This increased dialogue between NGOs and UNICEF at the decision-making level has strengthened the sense of common purpose, especially as efforts are made to ensure that the promises of the World Summit for Children are fulfilled;

(b) Programme staff from NGOs active in the field of nutrition met in an all-day consultation with UNICEF nutrition staff in New York to discuss UNICEF strategies for the 1990s and ways of reaching the Summit goal to reduce severe and moderate child malnutrition by 50 per cent by the year 2000. In addition, NGOs and other experts active in the area of breast-feeding have formed a new World Alliance for Breast-feeding Action in order to increase their effectiveness on this issue. The framework for their action will be the Summit goals and the Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breast-feeding;

(c) Ways in which NGOs can best respond to the challenge of the Summit will be on the agenda of the seventh annual forum of the NGO Committee, which will be held from 4 to 8 November 1991 at Harare. The theme will be "effective participation in local and global child development". An additional underlying goal is to promote a North/South and South/South partnership among NGOs in responding to the particularly difficult situation of many sub-Saharan African countries;

(d) Also as part of post-Summit mobilization efforts, the NGO newsletter, "Action for Children", will be integrated with two UNICEF publications to create the new publication "First Call", which will appear bimonthly. An increased amount of information will thus be disseminated more rapidly to a wide audience, including a new level of decision makers. This merger also places the NGO Committee in a more holistic perspective within the total work of UNICEF;

(e) The NGO Coordinating Group on Central and Eastern Europe, based at Geneva, has met four times, while a subsidiary body in New York has met once. This body is attempting to provide a more integrated and coordinated approach by NGOs, in consultation with UNICEF, to the region than has been attempted in the past;

(f) The NGO Committee, which has for some years been interested in children in especially difficult circumstances, has expanded the focus of that interest to give more concern not to just the physical, but also to the psychological needs of children. A recent seminar on children of war, entitled "Adult Response to Children in Time of War: Intervention, Theory, Practices and Techniques" and organized by two working groups of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, underlined that perspective;

(g) The NGO Committee has placed an emphasis on the girl child to complement the emerging interest of UNICEF. Special meetings are being planned to share information between NGOs and UNICEF and to develop strategies to overcome the obstacles to girls' access to education;

(h) The NGO Committee on UNICEF has secured a place on the International Facilitating Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development so as to ensure that environmental repercussions on children are brought into the overall deliberations and preparations for the Conference and to bring environmental concerns to the agendas of child-focused NGOs;

(i) An NGO Committee representative has been designated to work with the United Nations Commission on Social Development, which has been charged with the responsibility for the International Year of the Family;

(j) In the course of this year, several new member organizations have been added to the NGO Committee. These new members have made a significant contribution to the total work of the Committee by bringing new perspectives to other members.

7. This listing is not meant to be a recital of accomplishments. Rather, it is an expression of the commitment of NGOs to strive to be more inclusive, more integrated, more intentional and more focused on grass-roots issues in all that they do.

8. The NGO Committee on UNICEF sees the future as one of unique opportunity for significant gains to be made in the area of child development. At the start of this decade, when more children will be added to the world's

population than at any other time in human history, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children provide us with the aims to make significant progress in improving the quality of life available to all children.

9. We welcome and look forward to more opportunities for dialogue with the Executive Board of UNICEF and hope to strengthen the partnership which has grown over the years.

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STATEMENT BY LA LECHE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL

Nutrition goals and strategies for children in the 1990s

1. La Leche League is committed to the "Enhancement of children's health and nutrition" as stated in paragraph 10 of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children adopted by the Summit for Children. This is the first duty, as well as a task, for which solutions are now within reach. The lives of tens of thousands of boys and girls can be saved every day because the causes of death are readily preventable. Child and infant mortality is unacceptably high in many parts of world, but can be lowered dramatically with means that are already known and easily accessible. 1/

2. La Leche League is committed to the major goals set forth in the Declaration and in the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Chidlren in the 1990s. One of the major goals adopted for children in the 1990s specifically deals with breast-feeding: "Empowerment of all women to breast-feed their children exclusively for four to six months and to continue breast-feeding, with complementary food, well into the second year." 2/

3. Breast-feeding is a primary factor in the enhancement of children's health and nutrition. "Breast-feeding has advantages for both babies and mothers, and the advantages are seen in rich and poor nations. They include the prevention of gastrointestinal and respiratory illness, and of infections as well as certain immunologic disorders. In addition to preventing illness early in life, breast-feeding appears to reduce the risk of certain chronic diseases as well. It has advantages for the premature as well as the full-term infant." 3/

4. One of the major goals for child survival, development and protection in the 1990s states: "Between 1990 and the year 2000, reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under-5 children by half." 2/ La Leche League believes that breast milk is an unequalled complete food for the healthy growth of infants. The breast-feeding provides optimal nourishment for infants. It is a critical factor in child survival programmes and can save both infant lives and health costs. The achievement of nutritional goals for children requires that breast-feeding must be protected, promoted and supported.

5. La Leche League recommends to the UNICEF Executive Board that:

(a) UNICEF take the lead internationally to promote a shift from a bottle-feeding culture to a breast-feeding culture. This shift will occur only with a commitment to utilize all channels of communication and the necessary resources;

(b) UNICEF use the Convention on the Rights of the Child to support activities that educate parents about the importance of breast-feeding, and enable them to act on this knowledge;

(c) UNICEF remain committed to doing what is practicable for children, including the immunization of all children, and the empowerment of mothers to breast-feed;

(d) UNICEF support the broad base of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in protecting, promoting and supporting breast-feeding in order to meet the goals set forth in the Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breast-feeding;

(e) UNICEF support NGOs such as La Leche League in their efforts to strengthen the mother support group concept, which is instrumental in prolonging the duration of breast-feeding;

(f) UNICEF commit resources for publication and translation of materials for the expansion of mother support groups internationally, for training leaders and health care workers in breast-feeding management;

(g) UNICEF encourage Governments to preserve and encourage breast-feeding as a natural resource by supporting breast-feeding management programmes. "The Governments recognition of the value of breast-feeding and the use of breast milk as a natural global resource can help to stop the downward trend in breast-feeding and ensure the conservation of other natural global resources."; 4/

(h) UNICEF promote the education of girls so that the future mothers of the world will have the information they will need and the confidence to breast-feed their children. "Such education involves the removal of constraints and influences that manipulate perceptions and behaviour towards breast-feeding, often by subtle and indirect means. This requires

sensitivity, continued vigilance and a responsive and comprehensive communications strategy involving all media and addressed at all levels of society."; 5/

(i) UNICEF take the lead in promoting breast-feeding at the workplace. "Obstacles to breast-feeding within the health system, the workplace and the community must be eliminated."; 5/

(j) UNICEF take the lead in encouraging Governments and health workers to use and practise the 10 steps outlined in the "Joint UNICEF/WHO Statement on Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breast-feeding", given the fact that the first hours and days after birth are so critical in establishing a successful breast-feeding relationship;

(k) UNICEF acknowledge that breast-feeding is a first step in protecting the integrity and value of the family unit. During the International Year of the Family the value of breast-feeding as an important factor in the attachment process and reciprocal bonding between infant to mother should be promoted. UNICEF should recognize publicly that there is a link between instability in families and the problems that they seek to solve.

Notes

1/ World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, World Summit for Children, United Nations, 30 September 1990 (A/45/625), annex, p. 2.

2/ Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, World Summit for Children, United Nations, 30 September 1990 (A/45/625), annex, appendix.

3/ Alan Cunningham, Derrick Jellife and Patrice Jellife. "Breast-feeding and Health in the 1980s: A Global Epidemiologic Review", Journal of Pediatrics, 1991 in press.

4/ Joanna Koch. "Breast-feeding is a Global Natural Resource", statement to the Planning Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1 February 1991.

5/ "Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breast-feeding", WHO/UNICEF policy meeting, Florence, Italy, 1 August 1990.

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STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF CONSUMERS UNIONS

1. The International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU) is a federation of consumer organizations with members in approximately 70 countries, both developing and industrialized. IOCU links the activities of its members through research, information, education and advocacy. It represents consumer interests at international forums such as UNICEF.

2. IOCU is a founding member of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), a world-wide coalition of health, consumer, women's and development groups that are fully autonomous in their activities but share findings and information with each other.

3. Consumption involves more than just eating and drinking. Over the past 15 years, the work of IOCU has concentrated increasingly on health matters, such as the need for essential drugs, the oversupply of dangerous, ineffective and unnecessary medicines, the criminal promotion and sponsorship activities of tobacco companies. In conjunction with IBFAN, IOCU has specialized in pursuing the implementation of the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes at all levels and in all countries.

4. IOCU welcomes the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Indeed, there is no nobler cause than taking concrete action to protect basic human rights, and especially the rights of the child. The Convention calls on States Parties to ensure that all segments of society are informed of the advantages of breast-feeding, thus reconfirming the spirit and intent of the WHO/UNICEF International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes adopted in 1981. Every day, 3,000 to 4,000 babies die because they are denied the protection brought by breast-feeding.

5. The protection, promotion and support of breast-feeding are as essential now as they were in 1979 when WHO and UNICEF convened the extraordinary meeting on infant and young child feeding that actively involved the third system, i.e., non-governmental organizations. Although much has been achieved, if we do not continue to push ahead and consolidate the gains, a slide backwards will be inevitable. In our experience, one weakness has been that most Governments have not yet established a central point for all information on Code implementation and other measures to promote breast-feeding.

6. IOCU wishes to congratulate those Governments that have implemented the Code in full. Much appreciation also goes to the high-level policy makers who drew up the Innocenti Declaration last July. This Declaration is a vital new political commitment to breast-feeding and its operational targets are ambitious and achievable. IOCU has already started activities to help reach the Innocenti Declaration targets.

7. IOCU, in cooperation with other members of IBFAN, has assisted a number of Governments in establishing codes based entirely on the International Code and not just regulations covering labelling and quality as is still the case in many countries.

8. IBFAN is proud and honored to present to this Executive Board the results of its recent monitoring surveys on Code implementation. This is the fourth time that IBFAN and IOCU have published the state of the Code by country and the state of the Code by company. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Code and hence is a special occasion. We have worked overtime to collate and analyse all the necessary information and to bring you these results in time for the Executive Board meeting.

9. The state of the Code by country shows what 169 Governments have or have not done to implement the Code adopted by them 10 years ago. Countries are graded on a scale of 1 to 9. The best position is that of the entire Code passed as national law and, unfortunately, only nine countries have taken that step. The so-called voluntary Code is given a lower grade, but may be as good as law if properly implemented and monitored; 12 countries are in that position. In 28 countries, laws have been adopted that cover only some of the Code's provisions. In 29 others, draft codes are recommended and quite a few are gathering dust. No action at all has been taken by 19 Governments. The six countries that have an industry code, i.e. one drafted by the baby food industry, are probably in the worst position, since such codes tend to legitimize practices that are not permitted under the International Code because they undermine breast-feeding.

10. The state of the Code by Company reveals some improvement in Code compliance compared to 1988 when the previous world-wide survey was carried out. This year, hundreds of IBFAN researchers covered marketing practices in 79 countries, a truly impressive record. We surveyed 21 baby food companies and 19 manufacturers of bottles and teats.

11. Each of the marketing practices monitored was scrutinized according to specific articles of the Code, a strictly legal text exercise. However, the research shows that, while some companies have changed a few practices to suit Code requirements, many baby food companies are not complying with the spirit and aims of the Code, which was adopted as a means to protect and promote breast-feeding. Marketing practices change constantly and industry finds new promotion techniques that actually replace breast-feeding or discourage it. They can do so legally in most countries because Governments have not taken legal steps to stop such practices or do not strictly implement their laws.

12. Since the adoption of the Code in 1981, new kinds of baby foods and new marketing practices have appeared that were not contemplated at the time the Code was drafted. A few examples will illustrate this situation.

(a) Follow-up milks were hardly known in 1981 and are not mentioned specifically in the Code. Ten years later nearly every company has launched one or more of these milks in an attempt to widen the market and avoid Code restrictions. Although UNICEF and WHO state that "children should continue to be breast-fed ... for up to two years of age or beyond" and many mothers do continue to breast-feed beyond six months, much of the fierce promotion for follow-up formulas explicitly and implicitly claims that after a baby is four months old it is "normal" to replace breast milk with a follow-up formula;

(b) The range of so-called specialized formulas has expanded enormously and so has the promotion, especially to health workers, giving the impression that lactose intolerance and other "special conditions" are the lot of most babies;

(c) Health care facilities are still being used extensively for the distribution of industry-produced booklets and other information materials that are usually no more than advertisement in disguise. Few hospitals and professionals realize the subtlety of the messages. Much of this industry-sponsored material is actually disinformation that leads mothers to doubt their ability to breast-feed, which is the worst possible start.

13. Most baby food manufacturers also continue to act as though the Code was meant for developing countries only and continue advertising and promoting aggressively in industrialized countries. However, many of the parents' magazines and other literature from industrialized countries are sold or given out in the third world, and many health workers from there are trained in Europe or America. Industrialized countries are followed as role models in infant feeding as in other matters, quite apart from the fact that babies in the industrialized world have the same right to be protected from aggressive marketing as babies elsewhere. Supplies of infant formula donated to hospitals need to be stopped in all countries and unequivocally.

14. In order to protect breast-feeding, national laws need to be more flexible and focus more on marketing practices that discourage breast-feeding rather than on products that industry is constantly changing. That is where UNICEF, WHO and other organizations can act, by helping Governments draft

sound legislation and adopt effective policies to protect and promote breast-feeding.

15. We realize, however, that not only does breast-feeding need to be protected by legislation and other means, but also the mothers who breast-feed need to be supported in very concrete ways. Social infrastructures that encourage breast-feeding need to be created. This may mean effective implementation of maternity legislation in some places, to compulsory crèches in all factories in others and imaginative solutions to the real problems of women in the informal sector elsewhere.

16. We welcome the Innocenti Declaration and are glad to be part of the World Alliance for Breast-feeding Action (WABA), a new global, action-oriented initiative created just two months ago, with the aim of achieving the goals of that Declaration. The IOCU regional office in Penang, Malaysia, is presently acting as the WABA secretariat. What needs to be stressed is that WABA intends to expand and reinforce existing activities in support of breast-feeding.

17. If we want to succeed in discouraging bottle-feeding and create a new, global breast-feeding culture, as the Innocenti Declaration aims to do, we need a new political and financial commitment from Governments and agencies such as UNICEF and WHO, as well as donors.

18. Last February UNICEF called on NGOs to make their contribution. They are ready to act but need your backing. IOCU and its affiliated groups will continue to fight for the most basic of all consumer rights: the right to adequate nutrition for the most vulnerable of all consumers, our infants.

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STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD

Reaching the poorest

1. Every year the International Movement ATD Fourth World has high expectations of the UNICEF Executive Board session. This is particularly so this year, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child becoming international law, and with the promises made by heads of State or Government to the children of the world at the World Summit for Children last year.

2. The world community is now bound by those promises to its children that they will have "first call" on the world's resources in good times as well as bad.

3. "The children look up to the adult world. They look at us with trust. This is even truer for children in poverty because they expect everything from the adults. They believe that people don't want war, torture, hunger or injustice. We cannot deceive them. Because of the expectations children have of us, we are forced to refuse that any child be unhappy." These were the words of the late Father Joseph Wresinski (1917-1988), founder of ATD Fourth World. Having experienced extreme poverty himself as a child, Joseph Wresinski knew that the poorest children most often have last place on their nations' agendas. The Movement he founded with families in situations of extreme poverty has pledged to focus the attention of the world on its most forgotten children and their families.

4. As early as 1978, Joseph Wresinski appealed to UNICEF to be the advocate for all the world's poor children, in the North as in the South, in the East as in the West. Throughout the years, ATD Fourth World has called upon the world community and each nation and agency to give priority to the poorest and to enlist their participation. In 1989, UNICEF took an important step in this direction through its decision 1989/8 on "Reaching the poorest". For the

first time, it was clearly acknowledged that "a significant percentage of the world's population, including children and mothers, has not yet been reached". The resolution also states that "a more thorough knowledge of their situation and living conditions and of the preconditions necessary for their partnership will make reaching them easier".

5. The non-governmental organization (NGO) community understood the importance of this decision and the urgency of its application and follow-up. It was the focus of the 1990 NGO Forum organized by the NGO Committee on UNICEF. ATD Fourth World contributed its experience and that of other NGOs through a working paper describing why the poorest are not reached and conditions under which they could be.

6. We were very pleased to see that the report on The State of the World's Children 1991, in the chapter on principles of success, appeals for new priority to be accorded to services for the most disadvantaged and for the development of a more precise monitoring process more likely to lead to a reaching out to the unreached.

7. We, therefore, recommend that UNICEF cooperation with Governments and NGOs should lead to the establishment of a monitoring process in which the poorest and most disadvantaged families would participate, and that UNICEF be asked to identify and analyse actions that can reveal the conditions necessary for the participation and advancement of children living in extreme poverty.

8. The International Movement ATD Fourth World invites all delegations to come and see these children's messages at the Tapori Travelling Peace Exhibit in the Visitors' Lobby of the United Nations from 19 April to 5 May under the sponsorship of UNICEF and the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

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JOINT STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY:

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC CHILD BUREAU

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

WORLD UNION OF CATHOLIC WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

1. The above-mentioned non-governmental organizations (NGOs), preparing for the International Year of the Family, wish to express the hope that UNICEF, which took such an influential lead in the International Year of the Child and in calling attention to society's responsibilities to children at the World Summit, will assume an important role with respect to the International Year of the Family.

2. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children affirm the role of the family unit as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of the child.

3. Yet in its own texts, UNICEF does not seem to have been as assertive on the role of the family. In the State of the World's Children 1991, the child is hardly ever placed in the context of his or her family and community. More alarmingly, the family is presented several times as needing to be given knowledge and skills to work for the interests of children without recognizing its own knowledge, skills and views. The term "family" is attached almost exclusively to family planning and again in terms of the information that it should be given.

4. We have recognized with satisfaction that UNICEF has stressed the role of the mother in relation to the child and that important positive policy changes have resulted. A family, however, is not only the very special mother-child relationship, nor can the empowerment of women be the only factor, although an essential one, to consider in reinforcing the family's ability to fulfil its responsibilities. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other United Nations documents and declarations stress the equal responsibility of men and women in parenting, mention of the role and responsibility of the father is rarely if ever mentioned in the UNICEF context. This acquires added importance in view of the present and welcome emphasis of UNICEF on the girl child.

5. The State of the World's Children concludes with a vision of the world in which "every man, woman and child has adequate food, clean water, decent housing, modern health care and a basic education". We feel that a greater appreciation of the nature and role of the family in society could lead to a broader vision of men, women and children in relation to one another, fulfilling more than the very basic material needs.

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STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN

1. Through its regional seminars, workshops and international conferences, as well as in specific projects at the national and field levels, the International Council of Women (ICW) has had a long history of cooperation with UNICEF both directly as a sponsor and as a catalyst for assistance to its affiliated national councils.

2. As an organization with over 100 years of experience in working for the equality of men and women in all aspects of social, economic and political life, it is only natural that its interests in the health, education and welfare of women and children should coincide with those of UNICEF in specific programmes and projects, such as universal child immunization (UCI), maternal and child health (MCH) centres, breast-feeding, family planning, day-care centres, formal, informal and non-formal education, clean water and sanitation, protection of the environment, appropriate technology, alternate sources of energy, drug abuse, street children, abused children and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

3. Member councils benefiting from UNICEF technical support and cooperation have included those in Burkina Faso (support for teachers, provision of mopeds to reach rural settlements), India (workshops and extension courses, use of grain mills), Indonesia (literacy, training workshops for low-income women), Guatemala (health centre), Lesotho (nursery, kindergarten and primary and vocational training schools), Nigeria (water and women's farming cooperatives), Philippines (combating trafficking in women and children), Sierra Leone (immunization nation-wide), Turkey (breast-feeding, functional literacy) and Zimbabwe (sanitation projects in building latrines and wells, education in rural areas, maternal health centre).

4. Extensive programmes in UNICEF areas of interest in health and education are conducted as well by national councils of women in Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Western Samoa, Papua New Guinea and others. They range from immunization, breast-feeding and the control of diarrhoea to cultivating home gardens, tree planting and water purification; from family planning, health and nutrition education to vocational training, support of income-generating projects and the promotion of equal compulsory education for girls in the basic literacy skills, as well as extensive efforts in promoting and supporting administrative and legislative action. Attention is also given to special groups such as migrants and their children, refugees, children in difficult circumstances, etc.

5. The structure of each national council is such that the work of many or most, and in some cases all, women's organizations in a country working in different areas of interest, e.g. health, education, legislation, vocational training, economics, child and family, etc., are coordinated so that common aims may be pursued more effectively. In the same way, the national councils, through their standing committees in those areas of special interest that parallel the 13 standing committees of ICW and through their participation in the Executive Committee of ICW, develop resolutions and common plans of action that are acted upon between triennial assemblies of ICW. United Nations and UNICEF themes have been closely followed and often anticipated.

6. It is suggested that as women's organizations are country-wide in membership and encompass rural and urban areas, UNICEF might find it useful to provide them with training in the technical skills of project development through ICW and its national councils. The potential for reaching grass-roots populations would be considerable.

7. We welcome the decision adopted by the Executive Board at its last session that focuses attention on the girl child. As has become increasingly evident, to the extent that the girl child is given full access to health and educational opportunities, not only she but her offspring as well will be healthier, happier and more productive members of the family, community and nation. Conversely, a girl who has been undernourished, undereducated and constrained in her development potential has little chance of escaping poverty with its attendant high morbidity and early mortality for herself and her children. We hope that at its present session the Board will make every effort to ensure that UNICEF programmes do indeed focus on the girl child.

8. A theme that has recurred in a number of our regional seminars and reports of national councils is the importance of shared parental responsibilities in the home and in child-rearing. During the World Summit for Children, one of the heads of Government noted that there had been no reference to the role and responsibilities of the father. ICW believes that the health, welfare and development of children are seriously undermined when there is no partnership between the father and the mother in all aspects of family life, including the rearing of the children. It hopes that UNICEF will help to eradicate the outdated stereotypes that so often prevent such a partnership.

9. We would like to take this opportunity to express our profound appreciation for the remarkable progress made by UNICEF in recent years in saving millions of children's lives, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the success of the World Summit for Children under the outstanding leadership of its Executive Director and the Executive Board. ICW has been proud to cooperate in these efforts.